

THE SKEPTIC:  
OR.  
DISCUSSIONS OF AN  
UNBELIEVER  
WITH  
A CALVINIST, AN ARMINIAN AND A UNIVERSALIST.  
INTENDED AS A  
SUPPLEMENT TO MY  
“DIALOGUES”  
ON THEOLOGY.  
ALSO, A POEM, ENTITLED  
A HOPE OF  
IMMORTALITY: The  
Comfort and Solace of the  
Aged

BY D. N.  
PRIME



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# PREFACE

As I said in the preface of the "Dialogues on Theology," so I now say with increased emphasis: "It is not probable that the readers of that book ever expected to hear from me again as an author. I certainly did not expect they would but the same reasons which at that time prompted me to write, still exist." "I still live." And I feel physically and mentally able to perform the necessary work, and unable to do much manual labor. And my

mind, so far as I can judge, is still somewhat vigorous and active, and I love to keep it employed. And the great subject upon which I usually write — "Our immortal destiny" — is by no means exhausted, and has lost none of its interest to me, and will be my theme at this time.

But I have other and more special reasons for this attempt. The two prominent characters represented in the "Dialogues" were both believers of the Bible and the Christian religion. And the question at issue between them was not — are they true? for they both believed

they were; but, what do they teach? Now it is well known that there is a class among us who do not accept the Bible or the Christian religion as of divine origin, and Universalists are not unfrequently, though very unjustly, classed with them. And one prominent object of this little volume is, if possible, to reach them, and draw them to the truth. To convince them that the good old Bible contains a revelation from God, and brings to us "Glad tidings of great joy," which shall (eventually) be to all people.

Another prominent reason

for this work is this. In passing around among my friends and fellow-citizens, soliciting subscriptions for the "Dialogues," one great obstacle in the way of success was a spirit of indifference and skepticism upon the whole subject, which seemed to pervade a large portion of the community. I was told by some, "We take no interest in theology—write upon some other subject and we will patronize you." Another says, "You are fighting a man of straw; nobody believes that old heathen doctrine of eternal torments

now; let it alone and it will soon die out and pass away into utter oblivion, as many other false doctrines have done.”

That I admit is what ought to be, and what I ardently hope and believe will be in a not far distant future. But that time is not yet come. That cruel doctrine “still lives,” and is clung to with a tenacity worthy of a better cause, and is quite too often proclaimed with frightful zeal and vehemence. We have recently had an exhibition of this in our usually quiet village, before a large congregation,

composed mostly of children and youth; it was declared and held up to view in truly frightful language by a so-called evangelist, which if not quite up to the ravings of his predecessor and exemplar, Tertullian, who flourished in the third century of the Christian era, a sketch of whose history may be found in the “Dialogues,” page 48, was full of alarm and terror. Enough so, if fully believed and realized, to destroy the happiness of an intelligent and sympathizing universe. He classed Universalists with infidels, and said with

emphasis, “Universalism is the worst kind of infidelity.”

The proceedings of this meeting alone was enough to stimulate, and I think fully justifies me for publishing this little work. My object is to show, and I think I shall show, beyond all reasonable doubt, that that remark is altogether untrue. By infidelity I mean, and no doubt he meant, disbelief of the Bible and the Christian religion. How, all Universalists I have ever seen or heard of are believers of the Christian religion, as revealed in the Bible. It is their standard.

No sect in Christendom depend more decidedly on the Bible to sustain and prove their peculiar doctrines than they: and, in my opinion, no others succeed half so well. All Christian sects profess to believe the Bible, and no doubt they do—as they understand it, and that they do very differently. And that is what makes the trouble and keeps them apart. I think no one sect has any moral right to call others infidels until they prove them dishonest, for that is what their charge amounts to. If they are infidels and

call themselves Christians, they are surely dishonest. They are in fact hypocrites. That no one will dispute.

I will mention another little incident as an apology for this publication. Several months since I received by mail a number of copies of the *Investigator* from some person unknown to me—perhaps some infidel friend, for I have some, as good friends and well-wishers to the human race as can be found in the world. They cannot believe the Bible, simply because the evidence in its support is not sufficient to satisfy them of

its truth. It does not come up to their requirements. They cannot feel sure of it. They dare not trust it. The terrible doctrines that have been taught by its believers, and the cruelties, persecutions and martyrdoms that have prevailed throughout Christendom in consequence of these false theories—some account of which may be found in the "Dialogues," page 173—seem to them altogether inconsistent with the announcement of the angel to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you glad

tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And they are. Surely nothing could be more so. With such mistaken and false views, who can wonder that there are infidels? I do not.

But these papers, although wholly unexpected, came opportunely, if not providentially, and they have helped me essentially in this work. They afforded satisfactory evidence to my mind, that infidels "have as much humanity as the rest of mankind." They are of like passions with us, and have the same feelings, sympathies, desires and



great joy.” There are exceptions, no doubt. There are some wicked infidels; but not more, probably, in proportion to their numbers, than there are among professed Christians, and probably not half as many hypocrites! Even among the clergy I think it has been admitted by some of them, that they have their full share of hypocrites and base characters, of which we have quite too often lamentable evidence.

My earnest desire is to show them and all my readers that the gospel is what it professes to be, “The

glorious gospel of the blessed God,” and truly “Worthy of all acceptation, and that it will eventually be accepted and embraced by all. For St. Paul tells us that God “Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he has purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together in one all things (persons) in Christ,” and again, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” “And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall

also bear the image of the heavenly."

An objection has been made to my "Dialogues," that I write both sides of the questions; and I have been asked why I did not get a partialist to take the opposite side and defend his own views, and then the readers could better judge the merits of the case. I fully admit the validity and propriety of this objection, and can only say it was of necessity and not of choice. No one of the readers would have been more pleased than myself to have had a real sincere and intelligent

believer in endless punishment for an opponent. But I am confident such an one *could not be found*. If there is such a person I should like to hear from him. I have endeavored to defend that side by the best and strongest arguments I could obtain. Indeed, much of it is in the exact language of partialists as the careful reader will readily see by quotation marks. The same is true of the little volume I now offer to the public. — Most of the arguments of Calvin and Arminius is in the language of the believers

of their particular creeds. And Skeptic, who is evidently as sincere as any of them, speaks the views and feelings of a large class of unbelievers. Much of it is in their exact language. But the question to the intelligent reader is not so much who wrote them, as what do they teach? Are they true and valid? They must stand or fall on their own merits; and each reader is earnestly requested to judge for himself, candidly, impartially and fearlessly. The arguments are not mine—I lay no special claim to them. They all existed

before we saw the light. I merely hold them up to your view, Judge for yourselves. To *me they are conclusive.* And I venture to hope that that they will be satisfactory and convincing to all who will carefully read, and like Mary of old, “ Ponder them in their hearts.”

Respectfully your friend,

DANIEL N. PRIME.

Rowley,  
September 10, 1877.

# THE SKEPTIC: OR,

## THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS.

### DISCUSSION 1

*Between a Skeptic and a Calvinist—The Potter and the Clay; or God's Sovereignty and Man's Helplessness.*

CALVINIST. — Good evening, my dear sir, I am very glad to see you at this time. I have long felt desirous of having a friendly

conversation with you upon an highly important subject. The only one I think upon which we essentially disagree. I need not tell you what it is. It will not be new or strange to you.

*SKEPTIC.* — I presume it is the same that we have so often discussed, “Our Immortal Destiny.” Upon all other subjects we usually agree, but upon that we are complete antipodes. But I fully agree with you that this is a very important one, and I really wish we could agree upon it.

*CALVINIST.* — You are right. That is subject to which I refer, and it is to me a source of sorrow and regret that we cannot see alike respecting it I deeply lament that one of my best friends, one so virtuous in all other respects as I know you to be should make so great—so *fatal* a mistake as you certainly have upon this all important question. I do most earnestly hope you will see your folly and wickedness in so doing before it is forever too late. I entreat you at once to give up your infidel ideas and embrace the truth. Will you

not do it? I feel it to be my duty to tell you that however good and amiable you may appear to man you are in the sight of God a *Great Sinner!* In consequence of the fall of our first parents in the garden of Eden, you and I and "all mankind have lost communion with God, and are under his wrath and curse and so made liable to all the miseries of this life to death itself and to the *pains of Hell forever.*"

SKEPTIC. — My dear sir, if you really believe all this I wonder not at your feelings. The wonder is that you are



mistake! All a *great* and *hideous delusion!* Better, far better—would it be for our unfortunate race, if there was no God, as many profess to believe, than such an one you describe. Do you, my dear sir, really believe that such is our God, and such the awful destiny of a large portion of our race! Can you believe it and not be filled with horror and consternation? It seems to me that you, and other sincere believers of this awful doctrine have *never begun* to realize its *awfully tremendous import.*

*CALVINIST.* — I freely admit that it does seem dreadful to our human feelings, but they are not our standard. It will never do to trust them. The holy bible is our guide and instructor and clearly teaches all this. It is one of its cardinal doctrines and must be true. And it seems dreadful to me to have you talk as you do about the teachings of that holy book. How dare you thus to dispute and virtually reject it ?

*SKEPTIC.* — The reason God has given me emboldens me to dispute



sir, is the great trouble with you. You will not believe the plain teachings of Scripture! That is what makes me tremble for you! The Bible tells us plainly “He that believeth not shall be damned.” These are the words of Christ and *must be true!* I entreat you to believe and be saved. That is the only way “to escape from hell and fly to heaven.” I would gladly convince you of this terrible truth, and make you tremble for yourself and fly to the only ark of safety. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;” comply with the

terms of the Gospel and be safe from the deluge of wrath which will surely come upon all unbelievers in the future immortal state.

*SKEPTIC.* — I assure you, you will never convince me of the truth of such doctrines till you rob me of my senses. If God is holy, wise and good, as you believe, He will never bring about such dreadful results! If He should, it would at once annihilate all His moral attributes, his justice, his goodness, his mercy and his love, and leave him simply an Almighty tyrant, more to

be dreaded than loved. The reason and common sense that God has given me clearly teaches all this. They must be smothered and stifled before such monstrous ideas can be accepted and believed. I much prefer downright atheism to such a system. I rather risk myself without a God than with such an one.

*CALVINIST.* — But you cannot have your choice. We must submit to the God of the Bible; and it is not for you or me to say what is right for him to do. He is a sovereign! All power is in his



pleasure from all eternity elected some to everlasting life,” we should all have gone down to those dismal regions of horror and despair, where all the non-elect, or rejected of God, must surely take up their everlasting abode. All this the Bible clearly teaches, and must be true.

*SKEPTIC.* — And all this, you say, was foreordained, and in due time will be brought about by your holy, righteous and merciful God, our Creator, our loving father, and never-failing friend!

Monstrous

absurdity! Diabolical cruelty, it would be, if true! The human mind cannot conceive of a greater exhibition of injustice and cruelty than this would be! Such absurd and monstrous ideas seem to me enough to overthrow your whole system and drive us all to infidelity! No intelligent and sane mind, if free from prejudice, could give it one moment's credence. If this is all that can be brought to remove my doubts and convince me that the Bible is divinely inspired, your efforts will be in vain. It will rather tend to carry me back

and confirm me in the darkness and gloom of infidelity, which, though by no means fully satisfactory, is rather to be chosen than such unmitigated Calvinism as you advocate with such earnestness and zeal.

*CALVINIST.* — But you, my dear sir, cannot control these events. You and I and all mortals must submit to the plan of God. We should remember he is just as well as merciful and good, and “will by no means clear the guilty.” You must repent and believe or suffer the terrible consequences of unbelief.

And Christ, the righteous judge, will, if you continue in impenitence, at the last great day pronounce the dreadful sentence, “Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” All this is the teachings of Scripture and you cannot successfully evade or dispute it! How dare you disbelieve or reject? I should tremble to indulge such infidel thoughts.

*SKEPTIC.* — The reason which God has given me, and you, too, my dear sir, if you could freely exercise it,



beyond all conception.

*CALVINIST.* — I fear you will be left to your own choice and permitted to cling to your infidel notions until it is forever too late. And it will be said of you as it was of Ephraim of old, “*He is joined to His idols, let him alone.*” If you prefer infidelity to the truth, you may he permitted to sleep on in your refuge of lies, until you awake in that dark and dismal abode, where light or hope or happiness can *never, never* come. My dear friend beware!

*SKEPTIC.* — I by no means prefer infidelity to the truth — far from that. The truth — could I assuredly find it—I should prefer to all things else. It is the “pearl of great price” for which I am *most earnestly* seeking. But your awful doctrines seem to me as wide from the truth as the north pole is from the south. That is why I do not hesitate to totally reject and condemn them. I by no means charge God with doing wrong respecting them, but I deny that he will ever do them that is my position. I have no fear of doing this. I *believe it is right.*

*CALVINIST.* — Do you realize, dear sir, the immense difference there is between the great and incomprehensible God, and us his feeble, dependent and sinful creatures? We must remember that “He is in heaven and we upon earth and therefore our words should be few.” Do you fully realize that he is the great creator of all things and we but worms of the dust?

*SKEPTIC.* — I think I do in some measure realize it all, perhaps quite as much as you do yourself, and it is this

thought as much as any one thing that confirms me in my position. The more we exalt God and we cannot do so too much, and debase or lower down “poor feeble man” which I think may be overdone, the more cruel and diabolical the whole system of eternal torments appears. Do you not see it? Surely you must. To me it is demonstrative.

*CALVINIST.* — We knew that God does many things that would be wrong for us to do, but they are certainly right for him, otherwise they would not be done. He has a









## DISCUSSION 2

*Between the same — Same subject continued.*

*CALVINIST.* — Well, my friend, what do you think of Dr. Watts' hymn that came up at the close of our last interview, about the potter and the clay, or God's sovereignty and man's helplessness? That is what I call pure Calvinism. It met my views and feelings exactly.

*SKEPTIC.* — If it met and agreed with your views it



sentient and *immortal* beings, "just as he pleases." "Some for a noble end, and, some for viler use!" Some for *heaven* and some for *hell*! None can reply or "call his Maker's way unjust." If they do—"The thunder of his dreadful word, would crush a thousand worlds to dust." This is "intimidation" with a vengeance! All this to my mind is —or would be if true—the extreme height of cruelty and injustice, never equaled by the greatest tyrant the earth has ever borne up! Such monstrous ideas I assure you will never draw me to the love of *such a*

God, or to the belief of your cruel doctrines. They will surely repel rather than attract!

*CALVINIST.* — It really makes me tremble to hear you talk as you do about the great truths of the Bible. It is clear to me that God "foreordains whatsoever comes to pass." Not only the Bible, but reason teaches me, *it must be so*. If they *come to pass* they must have been designed by God. Don't you think so?

*SKEPTIC.* — I shall not argue that question with

you, but shall leave it for you to settle it with your friend Arminius. That is the exact point at issue betwixt you and him. I will only say that if God is wise, powerful and good, He never foreordained them and they will never come to pass.

*CALVINIST.* — Well, you are at least consistent, I think. They must stand or fall together. *I believe they will stand!* I fully believe in the old Assembly's Catechism, which was taught me by my good mother, in the last decade of the 18th century, eighty

years ago. That “God for his own glory has fore-ordained *whatsoever comes to pass!*” And also that “God from all eternity elected some for everlasting life.” *They* and *they only* can be *saved!* “And all others are non-elect, or reprobates, and are passed by in the eternal election of God, whom he decreed to leave in the common misery, into which they had thrown themselves by their own folly.”

*SKEPTIC.* — If that is the case, if such is the plan of God, who can alter it? Who can change his purpose?



unbelievers such as I am, but by a very large portion of the Christian sects throughout Christendom! Tell me, can it be possible that you still believe them?

*CALVINIST.* — It certainly is possible. I fully believe them all; though I must confess your remarks make it rather obscure. But the Bible clearly teaches it all, and we *must believe* it. And “who art thou, oh *man*, that repliest against God!” Has he not a right to do what He will with his own? And do we not all belong to him?

*SKEPTIC.* — You mistake, my dear sir. My reply was to you, a fellow-mortal, not to God. I verily believe He will do no such thing. He is altogether too wise and too good to treat us thus. He has the power, I doubt not, but not the disposition. “He knoweth our frame and remembers that we are but dust.” And if he is good, as we believe, we are certainly safe in his hands. But we certainly should not be safe if your doctrine was true! This alone satisfies me that it *cannot be true*. God—I say it reverently— cannot have a moral right to do wrong;

that is a contradiction. It cannot be. None but tyrants will claim that right! Do you not see it? Surely you must! I again assure you that no arguments you have adduced will remove my skepticism. They will rather have a contrary effect, and confirm me in the gloom of infidelity. For until I find something permanent and sure to stand upon, I must of necessity remain in doubt, and still be a “skeptic.”

*CALVINIST.* — I fear you take your own carnal and depraved reason for your standard, and not the holy

Bible. That will never do. We must believe what God says. Your reasonings and arguings are of no avail when they come in contact with the teachings of the Holy Bible.

*SKEPTIC.* — My reason is what God has given me. I believe it is my right, my duty, and my privilege to follow its teachings to the best of my ability, rather than accept such monstrous absurdities as you maintain. I rather still remain in doubt. I prefer skepticism to a false theory.





what you say? I do not believe the English language contains a more glaring exhibition of selfishness and disregard for the welfare and happiness of our fellow creatures,—the *whole of our race*, except our own dear selves, than is contained in your remark and proposal. Surely you cannot mean what your language implies! (For my views and feelings on this point, please see “Dialogues,” page 46).

*CALVINIST.* — That would he an extraordinary case, I admit, and what we by no means expect. Far from it!

But if it should be so, it would be all right, for God designs it all. But I believe there will be millions on millions, even “a great multitude which no man can number, out of every tribe and nation,” probably a majority of our whole race, who will eventually arrive at those happy regions of immortal bliss.

*SKEPTIC.* — And still you believe there will be other untold millions of the race, the children of God—of his power, if not his love — whom He, of his own free will, without their

knowledge or consent,  
“pushed into being!”  
foreordaining that, that  
awful hell should be their  
final abode! Now if the  
number of the elect is  
unalterably fixed, as all  
Calvinists believe, then it is  
certain that if you and I  
should by striving hard for  
the prize *squeeze in*, two of  
our brethren, as good by  
nature, — perhaps better by  
practice than ourselves,  
must thereby be excluded.  
All this, I can truly say,  
seems to me the very  
extreme of selfishness. You  
wholly ignore the Savior’s  
Golden Rule, “Do unto

others as you would wish them to do by you;" and the second great command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." I will take no part in such a selfish and exclusive scheme. I would quite as soon go with the reprobates and take my chance with them! But what an awful thought! What a terrible doctrine! What insanity, what madness, as it seems to me, to believe it, or for a moment to harbor a thought that it can be true. I *know*, if I know anything, that if God is *good*, that hideous doctrine *must be false!* Why, my dear sir, it is simply

charging God with predetermining all the sin and suffering with which the earth has been filled from the time of the flood, when the whole population, save Noah and his family, were swept away for their great wickedness, down to the present time. O, how dreadful! But I do not, I *cannot believe one word of it.* Can you, my dear sir?

*CALVINIST.* — I can! However dark and mysteri-

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fair on your part. I will

neither evade or shrink from answering it. I believe if it actually came to pass, and I doubt not it did, it *must have been predetermined by God!* although I admit it is wholly inexplicable to our limited perceptions. And if what we can see and understand in this life is the whole of the story, it would be utterly irreconcilable with the attributes of God. But if there is to be a whole eternity beyond the inevitable river of death, as all Christians expect, then this great mystery, as well as all others, we confidently trust will be satisfactorily

explained, and we shall clearly see that it was all right and all for the best, and be ready to say with the psalmist, “Great and marvelous are thy works, oh Lord, in wisdom thou hast *planned* them all.”

SKEPTIC. — And you, my dear sir, anticipate being one of the happy number of the elect of God, perfectly happy in the realms of bliss, in full view or with full knowledge of that “world of woe,” where a large portion of your fellow-creatures, and among them, in all probability, some of your own dear

friends, will be writhing and groaning in torments without the least hope of release through the ceaseless ages of eternity. Tell me, is this what you want me to believe? If so, I assure you I never shall, unless bereft of my senses. I do not want to believe such an awful story! I prefer to remain in doubt until some better explanation can be given,—some brighter, better prospects for poor suffering humanity! For according to the reason God has given me, and you to, my dear sir, if you could exercise it freely, your imaginary God would

be the most *cruel, unjust* and unmerciful being that we can conceive of. Just think of it a moment if you can grasp the thought. Think of a self-existent being, possessed of almighty power, infinite in wisdom and goodness. All nature and all possible events are in his hands and under control! None could stay his hand, or in the least interfere with his plans, or prevent their accomplishment?

"Whatever his Infinite Wisdom and goodness devise, his Almighty power will readily and surely accomplish! *Think, I again*



whole ETERNITY of *the same* was still to come—be granted an interview with their great but terrible Creator, would he not cry out to him, in the language of the poet—

*“Father of mercies, why  
from silent earth  
Didst thou awake, and  
curse me into birth;  
Tear me from quiet, ravish  
me from night,  
And make a thankless  
present of thy light,  
Push into being a reverse of  
thee,  
And animate a clod for  
misery.”*

## DISCUSSION 3

*Between a Skeptic and an Arminian — God Foreknows but does not Foreordain sin and misery.*

SKEPTIC. — Well, my friend Arminius, what did you think of my discussion with your brother Calvin, the other evening. I noticed you was present, and I thought you paid pretty good attention to our conversation. Did you think his arguments were conclusive in support of his position, and sufficiently

clear and demonstrative to convince me and other unbelievers that the Bible is the “word of God,” and that Christianity, as he explains it, is the sure system of truth?

*ARMINIUS.* — No sir, I did not. I am very sorry to say it, but I must admit that I thought you had the best of the argument. Though I am, as you well know, utterly opposed to your infidel ideas, upon that subject still I am quite as far from believing the cruel doctrines which he advocated and defended so tenaciously. I

fully agree with you that charging God with foreordaining endless misery for any of his own offspring, the work of his own hands, the creatures of his power and children of his love, is dreadful beyond all conception. I would quite as soon believe with the atheist that there is no God, as to believe that he has done or will do any such dreadful thing. But I do not believe either. I do believe *there is a God* who created, governs and controls all events and all affairs in the vast universe. I believe that he is Creator, Father and friend of

all intelligences, and is “good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works,” and “doth not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men.” But since the fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden we are all exposed to and justly deserve eternal punishment. But God has mercifully provided a way of escape. Salvation is freely offered to all. If any do not accept and are finally lost, it is their own fault and not the fault of God. They voluntarily choose the road to death; and God permits them to take their own chosen way and suffer the

dreadful consequences — which is eternal death.

*SKEPTIC.* — Then you believe with your friend Calvin that a large portion of our race will be finally lost, and sent away into that *same pit of horror!* there to suffer the *same dreadful torment* which Calvin assigns them through the ceaseless ages of eternity!

*ARMINIUS.* — I certainly do. However dreadful it appears to us, and I admit it does seem dark and mysterious, I believe it. It *must be so*, for it is clearly

taught in the bible, and I cannot, I dare not, disbelieve it. “Unless they repent in this life and are born again they cannot enter the kingdom of God.” And it is abundantly evident that a large portion of the human family thus far have lived and died in impenitence. They have had their season of probation; “their day of grace and neglected to improve it”; and have died without that indispensable change, and never can enter the kingdom of heaven. But it is all *their own fault* and not the fault of God. He would have gladly saved all

our race. The gospel was freely offered to all, but many would not accept it; and they will justly suffer the dreadful consequences of their own neglect. They must “eat the fruit of their own doings and be filled with their own devices.” They alone are responsible and must suffer the just desert of their own folly and wickedness.

*SKEPTIC.* — But my dear sir, how can you say that the gospel has been freely offered to all, when it is a fact that cannot be controverted, that a very

large portion of the world have been and still are in entire ignorance of it?

*ARMINIUS.* — That I admit is rather hard to explain. I can only say in reply that God has made it known to the world in various ways. By the Patriarchs and Prophets in olden times, and by Christ and his apostles and their successors, the preachers of the Gospel, down even to the present time. Christ commanded his disciples to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” and if they and their successors

have not done it, they are to blame. *It is not the fault of God!*

*SKEPTIC.* — But did not God foreknow and predetermine all this when he created man. Did he not have a plan in his mind which embraced all these events! Did he not know exactly what the result would be!

*ARMINIUS.* — He certainly foreknew it all. He sees the end from the beginning! The *present, past* and *future*, are all open to his view. But he did not predetermine it, *that*

*is sure.*

*SKEPTIC.* — If God foreknew it all, and knew, that such events were about to take place which he had not foreordained and was not included in his great plans, why did he not interfere, and prevent it?

*ARMINIUS.* — Because he left man free to act as he chose, otherwise he would not be a free moral agent. Life and death were set before him. He could choose which he pleased and abide the consequences! Is not that satisfactory?

*SKEPTIC.* — No my dear sir *it is not!* There is still another question, why did God create him under such *dreadful* circumstances, and make him liable to such an awful destiny? That is the great question! Why did he do it?

*ARMINIUS.* — Simply because it was his pleasure so to do — no other answer can be given. And it is not for you or me to call him to account for so doing! “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?”

*SKEPTIC.* — I have no doubt about that. God will surely do right. That is not the question we are discussing. But will he do all those dreadful things you and Calvin charge to him? That is the question. And again I ask you, if it was the pleasure of God thus to do, and for the best to have them done, why did not God foreordain them?

*ARMINIUS.* — The same answer as the last must suffice. I can offer no other. It was his pleasure *not to do it*. It is not for us to complain, *he knows best*.

*SKEPTIC.* — I do not by any means complain of God. Whatever he does is surely right. It is you, my dear sir, a fellow-mortal, with whom I am *discussing*, but not complaining. You surely have as good a right to your opinions as I have to mine. But do you not see that with God foreknowledge and foreordination are the same? They cannot be at variance. If God foreknows an event is about to take place and does not interfere to prevent it, he determines it shall take place. Nothing can be plainer. All this is clear to

me beyond a doubt. Is it not to you?

*ARMINIUS.* — It surely is not. I cannot see it thus.

*SKEPTIC.* — Well think a moment. How can God know an event will happen in the future unless he means it shall? I think you will upon reflection admit that with God foreordination and foreknowledge are the same. Now if God had known that a large portion of the human family, whom he was about to “push into being,” without their knowledge or consent,

would eventually suffer a whole eternity in torment, as you and Calvin both believe they will, and still went on to create them, what better was it in him or what better is it for us his feeble helpless and dependent children, than the doctrines of Calvin which you so vehemently and justly condemn? The final result which is the all-important point is just about the same. Your doctrine consigns a large portion of our race, apparently about the whole thus far, to an eternity of torments. He certainly can do no more or no worse. Nothing can be

plainer to my mind than this.

*ARMINIUS.* — I cannot for a moment admit that God foreordained all these dreadful things. And I at the same time feel sure beyond a doubt that he foreknew them all. That is a problem I cannot solve. He *did foreknow*, but *did not foreordain.*

Nothing surprises me more than your confounding them together and insisting that they mean the same when applied to God. That surely must be a great mistake. In my mind there is a very great

*D*ifference. Do you not see it?

*SKEPTIC.* — I certainly do not. When applied to God they must mean the same. For he must necessarily design before he can for-know. How else can it be? Does some other being lay the plan, and inform him? That you know cannot be. He must himself prepare the programme before he can know what will be the result. Do you not see it? Surely you must!

*ARMINIUS.* — I certainly cannot see it. At all events, I am sure he did not design it.

Surely such a being as we believe God to be would never lay such a plan, so full of horror! But he must have foreknew it all. That is quite certain.

*SKEPTIC.* — That, to my mind, is an impossibility. But if it was possible, and strictly true, it would not alter the case for the better. If he foreknew it, and did not prevent it, the responsibility would be the same, and the manifest injustice and wrong would be, no less.

*ARMINIUS.* — *My* dear sir,

to my mind, the position you now take is simply charging God with injustice and wrong-doing, which I should not dare to do. I tremble for you. How do you dare to do it? I assure you it is an unequal contest. He is surely right and will come out victorious.

*SKEPTIC.* — It may appear so to you, but it does not to me. I certainly have no such meaning. I am not contending with God! far from it. I simply mean that you, my friend and fellow-mortal, are not infallible. You may be mistaken. You

will hardly venture to say that this may not be the case. I cheerfully admit that you are half right. You are certain that “God did not foreordain all these dreadful things.” So am I. But you think they will surely take place, I do not. You believe with Calvin that a large portion of our race will suffer endless misery. I do not; that is the difference. And it is indeed a great difference. Who can estimate it?

*ARMINIUS.* — I admit it is a great question, and the thought of it at times almost

overwhelming; but I am confident the Bible *does teach it*, and I *must believe it*. I dare not reject the clear teachings of that Holy Book.

*SKEPTIC.* — Whether the Bible does or does not teach it, is all the same to me. I do not, I cannot believe it. I rather trust the reason God has given me, however weak it may be, than accept and believe such horrible doctrines, from whatever source they come. Such methods and such frightful bug-bears, as they certainly appear to me, can never convince me of the truth of

the Bible. They will be far more likely to have a contrary effect, and drive me, almost against my wishes, further down into the dark gulf of infidelity! If the Bible really teaches such monstrous absurdities I shall be compelled to totally reject it. But I want you to tell me how God could foreknow that man would sin so as to incur and deserve such a terrible punishment, unless he meant it should be so?

*ARMINIUS.* — I think the answer is clear and obvious. God made us free moral

agents and accountable to him for our acts. Right and wrong, life and death are set before us. We can take our choice, and abide the consequences. Now God certainly knew which we should choose, for he knoweth all things, men's sins and the dreadful consequences included. Of course he must have foreknown it all, but that did not in the least interfere with our freedom. We could choose as we pleased for all that. Do you not see it?

*SKEPTIC.* — I believe I do. It is all very plain and I

freely admit it all. If there is such a God, and such are his plans, which I shall not *now* dispute, it must be as you say. This is all good sense and sound logic — God must have surely foreknown it all. And this, my dear sir, is not the whole of the story. It is to me just as clear, as right and as true that he *foreordained* that it should be so. To my mind, if one is true, the other *must* be. They cannot be separated. For surely such a God is and must be present at all times and in all places. He surely is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent! And still

further, in my opinion, He and He only — I say it reverently but earnestly — He only is entirely and solely responsible for the final result of His own great plan in creating such a world as this, and such a race of mysterious beings as we, its inhabitants, are, and exposing us to “all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell forever.”

*ARMINIUS.* — Then if I understand you, you do not hesitate to charge all the sin, the evil and misery in this world, and all its dreadful

consequences in the world to come, directly to the purposes of God; for you say he *designed* and *foreordained* it all!

*SKEPTIC.* — I mean just what I say. But I do not intend to engage in a theological discussion with you. I leave that for you to settle with our friend Calvin. I will only say, that if God and our relations to him are as you represent them, then my conclusions are certainly correct. If God has voluntarily given us existence, and placed us here as we are, exposed to all





*And would not help us if  
they could.*

So far from this—according to the teachings of modern evangelists and revival preachers they are constantly doing all in their power to keep us away from God and draw us down to those same regions of horror and despair to which you and Calvin so confidently assign a large portion of our unfortunate and helpless race.

*ARMINIUS.* — My dear sir, permit me to ask, Are you really speaking your own

sentiments or those of others, for your remarks are somewhat different from what I should have expected from you?

*SKEPTIC.* — Your question is a very proper one, it needs no apology. I thank you for it, for I do not wish to be misunderstood. You will see that my statements are usually qualified with an “if.” I endeavor to meet your arguments by others derived from your Christian brethren of different sects. Even our friend Calvin is quite as strenuous and decided against your views,

and so are you against his, as I am against both. I am, as you well know, somewhat skeptical upon the entire subject. I do *not know*, but most earnestly desire to know, what is the truth. That is the pearl of great price for which I am most earnestly seeking, and that is my object in these discussions. I want some solid ground to stand upon; I want something, too, that I can comprehend, which appears consistent with reason and common sense, and is satisfactory to the desires and longings, the hopes and “earnest expectations” which





mistake.

*ARMINIUS.* — My dear sir, are you not taking rather a bold stand? Are you not setting up your own carnal and depraved reason as your standard, rather than the plain teachings of the Holy Bible.

*SKEPTIC.* — No sir, not exactly so. You leave out the “if.” I say *if* it teaches such doctrines I must reject it. But I by no means admit that it does. That you see alters the case essentially. But even if our translation does teach them, it by no

means proves them true. It may be a mistake of the transcribers or translators, neither of which claim to be inspired, and not the exact meaning of the original text. I think after all there is quite as much difference between your views and Calvin's as there is between you and me. When you and him, and all believers in the Bible, can fully agree upon its teachings, then you may, perhaps, with more propriety charge us with infidelity. I have no hesitation in saying that if the Bible does teach these terrible doctrines they could

never emanate from a holy and good being, *That is where I stand!* Do you not understand me?

*ARMINIUS.* — I believe I do perfectly. You make your platform very plain and clear, and I confess that in view of the dreadful system of Calvin, I cannot much wonder at it! I am almost prepared to say that if I believed the Bible taught that awful system I should be compelled to do the same, and reject it. But I do not. Far from it! To my mind the Bible clearly teaches the goodness and love of God to

all the human family; that we are all his children and he is the father and friend of all! And if any of the race are finally lost, it is their own fault and not the fault of God. Do you not, my dear sir, see a great difference between his system and ours?

*SKEPTIC.* — No, my dear sir, I must say again, I *do not*. The result, which is the all-important point, is about the same. And I will say to you, as I said to him, I shall not argue this point with you, but leave it for you to settle with him. I will only



## DISCUSSION 4

*Between a Skeptic and a Universalist—Calvinism and Arminianism about the same in results—Foreknowledge and Foreordination the same with God.*

*SKEPTIC.* — Good evening, my dear sir, I am very glad to meet you here at this time, and was much pleased to see you present the other evening to hear my discussions with your two brother Christians, Calvin and Arminius. What did you think of them? Were they

interesting and instructive?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — It is true I was present upon both those occasions, and listened with much interest though not with entire satisfaction. Although both of your opponents were professed Christians, their views upon some very important points are as wide from mine as is the north from the south pole. Some of their doctrines are quite as obnoxious to me as they evidently are to you; and I have quite as little sym-

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ing to Calvin ordaining that that dreadful hell should be their eternal abode.

*SKEPTIC.* — So it seems to me. Your remarks correspond with my own feelings. But I am very much surprised to hear you talk as you do. I thought you was a Christian and believed the bible, which I supposed clearly taught these doctrines. Does it not!

*UNIVERSALIST.* — No sir, it does not, as I understand it. There lies the mistake. That is what keeps us apart.

That is the difference between your two friends, Calvin and Arminius, and myself. They both believe that the bible teaches that cruel doctrine. I do not. It is true that there are some few passages in our translation that, are so understood by some; but in the original there is no sure evidence of Endless Misery! Some of the most talented and learned divines of the partialist sect tell us this is so. Dr. Edward Beecher says: "All the evidence there is that some of the ancients held to the doctrine of endless misery in the bible is one original

word, *olam* in the Hebrew and *aiom* in the Greek. If that does not translate eternal then the evidence fails.” He further quotes from the Old Testament numerous passages in which *olam* is used in reference to temporary things, and then says: “This is positive demonstration that the word *olam* means an indefinite period, and not an absolute eternity.” (Here I venture to refer the reader to my “Dialogues on Theology,” page 32), where the subject of Mistranslations is more fully discussed, and I think it is demonstrated that the

cruel doctrine of Endless Misery is not taught in the original scriptures. (And here I once more request any believers of that doctrine to inform me what further evidence they can find of *endless* misery in the Bible, except that one word, *olam* in the Hebrew and *aion* in the Greek. I have made this request repeatedly, and no one as yet has condescended to reply.

*SKEPTIC.* — Permit me to ask, Can you read the Scripture in the original languages—the Hebrew and the Greek.



on any other subject. (And this I think I have clearly shown in my “Dialogues,” to which I once more refer the readers.)

*SKEPTIC.* — Here, my dear sir, permit me to ask, and I do it in the utmost sincerity and earnestness, what is your Bible worth if its meaning and teachings are so indefinite and uncertain that you and your friends Calvin and Arminius, all of you honest and sincere as I verily believe you to be, and the numerous conflicting sects throughout Christendom, should differ



conflicting sects, each sure, zealous and unyielding in support of their own views, and anathematizing all others, (of which abundant evidence may be found in the “Dialogues,” page 163). It seems to me if the Bible is really the Word of God, and our eternal interest depend at all on a right understanding of them, they ought to have been perfectly clear and plain, beyond the possibility of mistake. Does it not seem so to you?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — It certainly does. Your remarks exactly correspond with my



is altogether too good, too wise and too just, thus to deal with his own feeble and dependent offspring, to whom he has, of his own free will, without their knowledge or consent, given existence.

And the bible when rightly understood certainly teaches no such dreadful doctrine.

*SKEPTIC.* — But God certainly has not sent the bible and the gospel to all the world. A large portion of the earth still remain in heathen darkness without the light of the Gospel or knowledge of the Bible. Now

if it is of such infinite importance, why is it so? Can you give any good reason for this?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — It is very true that the Bible and Gospel has not yet been sent into all of the world or "to every creature," as Christ commanded. But the other part of the proposition *is not true!* He has not left us all exposed to that *awful doom*. That *is all fabulous!* It cannot be proved by reason or scripture. The passages which are claimed as proof of that doctrine in our translation can all be





not; the idea is preposterous! It *cannot be* it is enough for us to know our duty towards God and our brethren of the human family, to know and believe in "the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man." And that he has "purposed in himself eventually to gather us all together in one great and happy family—in Christ." All this I think the Bible clearly teaches. Indeed most of it as you will see is in the language of Scripture. My Brother member of the same great family with myself, permit me for once to appeal

to your human feelings, for I know you possess them. Do you not hope that such will be the final result? Do you not hope to live again? In a *brighter* a *better* and *happier* world?

*SKEPTIC.* — My dear friend, I fully appreciate your kind and sympathetic feelings, and I freely admit that I should be glad to fully realize that such was our prospects, and no one would rejoice more than I and to find it even so. But I cannot, I dare not expect it. "It is indeed too good to be true." It cannot be, oh *that it could*



them. Make no apology; it proves what I well knew before, that you, infidel as you call yourself, have the same human feelings as the rest of us. Nothing more suitable, nothing more manly than tears, at a proper time, and that time is now yours. Weep on, brother, but do not despair. I trust if you now “sow in tears you will eventually reap in joy.”

*SKEPTIC.* — Oh! that it might be so. But it *cannot!* It is all imaginary! There is no sure evidence of it. I wish there was. "I should be glad to live again." I have as

much humanity perhaps as the rest of mankind, but *no hope* of the kind you speak of. Hope implies expectation, but I have not any as regards Immortality. I view it an impossibility. "Physiology disproves Immortality, which is but a dream." "I have not that faith."

*UNIVERSALIST.* — I admit that faith is somewhat like a dream. But if the hope of Immortality is a dream, it is truly a pleasant one, why will you disturb me? To dream of a state of perfect happiness in the future

immortal state, would be beautiful indeed. But true faith is not altogether a dream. St. Paul says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen?" I like his definition better than yours. It has both substance and evidence. Can you not depend on it?

*SKEPTIC.* — I cannot! To me they are both imaginary. I cannot confide in them. I cannot *grasp* them. They are beyond my comprehension, and seem to be involved in impenetrable mystery.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That is true in regard to almost everything about us, even our own existence is a great and inconceivable mystery. Our whole life is but a *dream*, too often disturbed by gloomy anticipations and dark forebodings and hideous nightmare. As Pope says,

*“This whole scene of man,  
is  
A mighty maze, but not  
without a plan.”*

But the plan was laid by the great and Almighty architect and Creator of all Worlds

with all their inhabitants. And their origin and destiny is all the result of his Almighty power wisdom and goodness. And *that plan must be good*. There must be something better in store for us yet to come. This scene of turmoil confusion, sin and suffering *cannot be the whole!* There must be other scenes and other connections yet unseen by us.

*“And man who here seems principle alone,  
Perhaps acts second to some sphere to us unknown,*

*Touches some wheel or  
verges on some goal;  
Tis but a part we see, and  
not a whole.”*

*“Hope humbly then, on  
trembling pinion soar,  
Wait the great teacher,  
death and God adore.”*

## DISCUSSION 5

*The same subject continued—  
Letter of Condolence to Skeptic  
upon his Brother’s Death—  
Infidels as well as Believers  
long for Immortality.*

**UNIVERSALIST.** — At our last interview you made the

the remark that "physiology disproves immortality." This probably is true in regard to our corporal bodies; they are mortal and must dissolve, and moulder back to dust from whence they came. But not so with the soul, the immortal part, that which distinguishes us from the brute creation—that we confidently believe will still live on! "The dust will return to the dust as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it."

*"That vital spark of  
heavenly flame,  
At death will quit the  
lifeless frame;*

*And with immortal vigor  
rise  
To realms of bliss above  
the skies."*

I know but little about the sciences you speak of, but I do know by the light of history that many great and good men, Christians, Jews and Pagans, have believed in a state of immortality beyond the grave. They or you must be mistaken. And I venture to hope that in this case it is my infidel friend, (who I know will pardon me for saying it,) that is mistaken, and not those ancient worthies who, like



for, and I believe, in spite of your infidelity, *hope* for, though perhaps unconscious of it. For I believe that every individual of the race who becomes a moral agent is in some degree blessed with this hope. (For my views more fully on this point, see "Dialogues," page 177.)

*SKEPTIC.* — My dear sir, your poetical quotations from the writings of Alexander Pope, esq., are quite interesting to me: I am glad to hear from them again: they were familiar to me many years ago, in my school days; they are all full

of good sense and sound logic, but rather too visionary for my present purpose. I want facts and demonstrations rather than imaginings and conjectures. How did Pope, or how do you know, there is a future immortal state? That is a question I want you to answer. If there is such a state beyond the inevitable river of death over which we must all soon pass, I should like to know it: I want evidence of it. Nothing less than this will satisfy me. Is it not reasonable? Is it not just that I should have it, if it is really so to be?





Can you not, my brother, feel thus? Can you not leave all in the hands of our Father? What better can we do? Who can we so safely trust?

*SKEPTIC.* — I really wish I could feel thus, and certainly know that all is right.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — St. Paul said in reference to the future, "We *know* that if this earthly house was dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And all who implicitly believe the

Bible do know that immortality is brought to light therein; they accept and believe it, and wait the result. And there is much evidence beside the Bible to sustain a hope of immortality, some of which has been adduced during our very pleasant discussion, and more will be, perhaps, before we close. We venture to believe and trust it; that is all we can do. You who are skeptical and unbelieving must judge for yourselves. That is all. But if you *cannot* accept, believe and trust in the evidence which the Bible and our reason and common

sense affords, I think it is a misfortune rather than a crime. Don't despair,—still seek for further light. The truth is before you, strive to find it. The fact is, we do not *certainly know* but *very little* about the future. We must necessarily take many things on trust. But we can hope, and expect, and believe. This let us do, with full confidence that "*Our Father is at the helm,*" and all will assuredly be well at last! The good time, I trust, is yet to come.

**SKEPTIC.** — My dear sir, your remarks awaken



this occasion.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — I should like much to hear it, and will cheerfully give you my whole attention.

*SKEPTIC.* — (Reads letter.) "I was present at your brother's funeral last Sabbath. I am not conscious of having met him but once in life, and then in a very brief interview, in which (knowing our friendly relations) he introduced himself as your brother. I parted with him with the feeling that he was all heart, and soul, and nobleness—



brothers meet again, and find life to be a boon better than any earthly heart can ever conceive. You and I have walked and communed together very pleasantly on one side of Jordan; let us hope that we may yet find still better communion on another and still brighter side. When I view a scene like that on Sunday, where the tears and affections of all are mingled, it seems to me that human sympathies and the hearts that contain them are too valuable, too sacred and too good to die! That human life must have more durability and more purport



friendship for you, and sorrow for your affliction, such eulogistic remarks respecting your departed brother, and such ardent longings for immortality for himself and his departed friends, which I believe are universal. *All want to live again!* We all long to meet departed friends again. There is a void in every human heart, especially those who have lost near and dear friends by death, which nothing but a hope of immortality can fill, we all have desires, aspirations, and longings, which nothing but *such a hope* can alleviate!



ever conceive. Surely you *can* and you *must*. I am glad to find that infidels, or those who call themselves such, are by no means exceptions. They, too, have the same "earnest expectations," the same longings and desires for immortality. They cannot suppress them, especially in times of affliction, sorrow and death, such as you are now experiencing. And if infidels feel thus, surely we who believe the promises in the Bible of a glorious immortality may well believe and rejoice in them. Was you not much pleased and comforted by that truly

## interesting letter?

*SKEPTIC.* — I certainly was, and I expressed my feelings and thanks to my friend in a brief reply, in which I thanked him for his kind and sympathetic letter and for his attendance at my brother's funeral, and said, "Such expressions of kind and friendly feelings are gratefully received and appreciated and can never be forgotten; nor am I insensible to the benevolent thought or wish that '*there must be something beyond*,' for if this was the established order of nature



do we mean to be hypocrites; we are open to conviction and ready and anxiously waiting for more light. When all are convinced that your views are correct, infidelity *will surely cease.*

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That is right! I ardently hope you will soon obtain that light. I do not wish you to accept or profess, what does not appear to you true; I hate hypocritical professions. Truth is *the pearl* we should all seek for. Infidels are not often hypocrites, that is a remark I have often made,

and I think it is true; infidelity is not popular enough for that.

*SKEPTIC.* — “We profess and maintain what we believe, and if we are mistaken, I trust that while standing here, as it were in the presence of death, with my dear brother’s sudden departure still fresh in my mind, you will believe me sincere.”

*UNIVERSALIST.* — I do not doubt your sincerity in the least, but I do doubt your infallibility, I think you are mistaken; *that is all*. But you

require certain knowledge or “proof beyond a doubt.” That is going rather too far, it is demanding more than we can reasonably expect, and what few if any obtain in this life. If we certainly knew what is to be in the future, there would be no place for hope or faith; there are many things hoped for and expected in the future of which we have no certain knowledge beforehand. That *hope* sustains and comforts us for the time, even without that certain knowledge—and the stronger our faith or hope or “earnest expectation” of a future

good—the more comfort and consolation it will afford in times of sorrow and affliction, such as you are now experiencing.

*SKEPTIC.* — I admit the soundness of your logic, but it is hard to hope against hope. Of what avail is it to hope for things beyond our reach? It is too much like the fox in the fable jumping for the grapes which were far above his reach; he came to the conclusion that they were sour and gave it up. So I fear it will be with those who vainly hope for immortality. I want some

more reasonable ground for hope than I have yet found in its support. I see no sure evidence but that when we die, we cease to exist, as the case with all other creatures of which we have any knowledge. We have but one life to live, apparently, and when that is ended, *we are done*; so it seems to me.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That would be a gloomy thought to me; is it not to you?

*SKEPTIC.* — Well, I must admit that it is somewhat so to me, I always shudder at the thought of annihilation,

but it is far preferable to the doctrine of your two friends, Calvin and Arminius. I should be *glad to live again*, if that had been the order of nature. I am not afraid of a future life; but to me it *seems* impossible. It *cannot* be!

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That my dear sir, you do not certainly know. You will not venture to say that you do. You may be mistaken. You have freely admitted that you should be glad to find that you are. I hope you will have the happiness so to find it. The good old Bible,

which you after all have some respect for and some true regard, clearly teaches a glorious immortality! Can you not trust that?

*SKEPTIC.* — Not in all cases! I am sorry to say it, for as you say, I have some respect and regard for it; but the light of science clearly shows that some of its statements *cannot be true*; and man's immortality, I think, is one of them, as I have already told you. Do you not recollect it?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — I do. I remember, too, that I

replied to it, and said that that might be true in regard to the body, but not of the soul. And so it remains. But history records the fact that many learned and good men, heathens as well as Christians, have believed that the soul of man is immortal. And the author of that letter evidently feels that it *may be* so. Why cannot you, as well as they, if you cannot fully rely on the Bible, still *hope* that it is even so. I have said in the "Dialogues," that such a hope is universal; and I shall not yet give it up. Pope, as you well know, says;

*“What future good he gives  
not thee to know,  
But gives that hope, to be  
that blessing now.  
Hope springs eternal in the  
human breast,  
Man never is, but always  
to be, blest.”*

*SKEPTIC.* — All that is true in reference to this life. All are looking and hoping for something better to come. But these feelings and hopes must necessarily close at death! It is a gloomy thought, I admit, but if it is the order of nature and our inevitable destiny, why



*Rests and expatiates in the life to come."*

That is a beautiful idea to me. *This is not our home.* There must be something better yet to come. Here we are uneasy and confined. There we hope to be easy, free and satisfied, and permitted to roam unrestrained amidst the inconceivable and unbounded wonders of creation! Without a state of immortality beyond the inevitable "River of Death," our existence would be a total failure; it might as well never have been. Then it



## DISCUSSION 6

*The same characters and subjects continued — A Gleam of Hope in Skeptic's Mind — We May Live Again, and meet our Departed Friends — What a Glorious Thought.*

SKEPTIC.— My dear sir, since our last interview I have thought considerable about that glorious immortality upon which you dwelt at that time. I had before looked upon it as a mere myth or flight of the imagination, without any

solid foundation, a mere  
ignis fatuus. And then again  
the frightful descriptions of  
that world of woe to which a  
large portion of our race are  
said to be destined, in that  
immortal state, has  
compelled me to dread,  
rather than desire, such a  
consummation! But your  
remarks have changed my  
views and feelings very  
much. Not that you have  
convinced me of its truth,—I  
wish you had, but you have  
removed all fears of it. And I  
do most sincerely wish it  
might prove true.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That

wish, I think, implies a hope. Cherish it and it will grow stronger, and comfort you, perhaps, until you can say with Paul, as above quoted, "*I know,*" &c. — He seemed to have that assurance which you require, and which we all should like but which few attain. He *knew*, while most of us can only *hope!* To that hope let us all cling. Can you not, my friend, do this? Can you not say with confidence, "*I hope* such will be the result!" That is all very many Christians venture to say. You admit that you have a desire for it. Can you not then *hope*, and to some

extent *expect* it? Surely you may.

*SKEPTIC.* — I really wish I could; I will admit that. *I should love still to exist!* But I want better and surer evidence of it; then I would readily and cordially accept and believe it. For upon a subject so immensely important as that is to us, we really ought to be well informed. If our eternal interests are in any manner suspended on a knowledge and belief of it, it ought to be and surely would be perfectly clear and plain, so that all who are so deeply

interested in its tremendous results, should perfectly understand it, which we all know is very far from being the case. Surely there is something very wrong about it.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That is indeed too true. There is something wrong. And you, my dear sir, are surely wrong in supposing that our eternal interests depend *at all* upon our belief or disbelief of the Bible or any particular creed. We do not believe any such thing. Your remark would have been more appropriate to Calvin

or Arminius than to me. They both believe that idea. We Universalists *do not*. We have too much confidence in the wisdom, goodness and *justice* of our heavenly Father to believe that he would thus expose and jeopardize the immortal souls of his own offspring, the work of his own hands, the creatures of his own power, his care and his love, upon such an uncertain and precarious basis as our belief or unbelief of any of the various dogmas with which Christendom abounds! No sir, I assure you we believe no such improbable and



image of the heavenly." And that eventually, "every creature that is in heaven or upon the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," (or the whole intelligent universe) "Shall ascribe blessing and glory and honor and power unto him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

*SKEPTIC.* — If this is so, if we could feel sure that such is to be the destiny of our race, why all this trouble and anxiety, this fear and trembling in regard to our

future immortal interests! Why all this tremendous excitement now going on in various places throughout the country upon this subject, under the preaching and singing and other exciting procedures of Moody and Sankey and other so-called evangelists? Why *is it so?*

*UNIVERSALIST.* — Sure enough. Why is it so? I cannot tell you why. No good reason can be given for it. I believe it is *wrong*: it ought not to be. It is the legitimate effects of a mistaken and false theology,

which has been propagated and drilled into the minds of a large portion of the community, not only by an interested and designing priesthood, before and since the Reformation, but by many honest but mistaken preachers of the gospel from that time down to the present, which has literally filled all Christendom with strife and contentions, persecutions and martyrdoms, as portrayed in "Dialogues," page 163; until it has become so riveted in the minds of a large portion of the community that it seems almost impossible to



conscious that the former is the sure way to happiness, and the latter the sure way to misery in this life. There are the motives that ought to prompt us to do right, to *do* and *to be* better. To reform merely for fear of some terrible punishment is one of the meanest and lowest motives possible, and will never make the heart better. We ought to love God because he is good, and really worthy our homage and highest love, and not to escape his vindictive wrath, and we ought to manifest our love to God by loving, sympathizing with and

helping our fellow-creatures when in need; by loving them *as we love ourselves*. That is the true way to show our love for God. We should love God because he is our father and loves us; and our fellow-creatures because they too are the children of God and our brethren. These are the motives which should prompt us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves."

"He that saith I love God, and hateth his brother *is a liar*." We ought to have full confidence in God as a father, and trust implicitly in his goodness, his wisdom

and his power, and leave all future events in his bands and under his control, and feel sure that all is safe, and will come out right at last.

*SKEPTIC.* — And do you really think that your Bible teaches all this? This is very different from what I have always supposed. If such is the teaching of the Bible, and such the hope, belief and practice of Christians, I shall surely think differently about them from what I have done. Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That is just what King Agrippa said to Paul when a prisoner before him pleading the cause of Christianity. And I venture to reply to you, as Paul did to him: "Would to God that not only you but all skeptics and doubters upon this great question were not only almost but altogether what Paul was except his bonds." In reply to your question, I will only say, that, to my mind the Bible, when rightly translated and understood does teach all that I have said above. I know it is different from the views of our two friends and

a large portion of the so-called orthodox divines of the past, and quite too many even now. But *they are not my standard*. The good old Bible with the reason and common sense God has given me to understand it, together with the innate convictions of my own mind as to what is right, true and just, are my teachers and guide. On them and on the good being whom I venture to believe inspires them, I confidently rely.

**SKEPTIC.** — Most of your remarks correspond with my own feelings and they

have brought me to what I now am, an unbeliever of the Bible, which I always supposed was the fountain from whence all these cruel dogmas originated. They have been to a great extent the cause of my skepticism; but they do not seem to have done the same by you. Why is it so? Why do you with apparently the same motives, feelings and wishes, so cordially accept the Bible as a revelation from God, whilst I am constrained to disbelieve and reject it?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — If we are both honest, and I verily

believe we are, it must be because we understand it differently. You have probably found by the aid of science that some parts of it are not literally true, and as a consequence you reject the whole. You think, perhaps, that if the whole is not inspired no part of it is. That, I think, is your mistake. Some parts of it may be and others not, for it was wrote, as is well known, by different authors in different ages. Some of them might have been "moved by the Holy Ghost," and others not. We *do know* that there are some *mistakes* in it,

especially in our English translations, and even in the original there are many things about which the learned do not agree. Under all these circumstances it is clear to me that we cannot be under obligation to believe any part of it which does seem to us inconsistent with right and justice; and it cannot be a very great crime for common minds to reject any part of it which appears to them impossible or untrue. True religion and common sense usually agree; and the Bible when rightly understood, I believe will be in harmony with

both.

*SKEPTIC.* — My dear sir, you surprise me very much. You seem to take a calm and reasonable view of the whole subject. I have never heard the Christian religion treated and described in so pleasing a manner before. Could I but view it in the light you appear to, it would indeed be "glad tidings of great joy" to me; but it cannot be; it is indeed too good to be true.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — My dear sir, *it is not, not a bit too good!* I say it reverently but confidently. It is no better

than we should expect our God to be if we were disinterested arbitrators in the case. It is no better than the angel announced to the shepherd on the plains of Bethlehem: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." Nothing less than universal restoration to holiness and happiness can fulfill that glorious promise; nothing less can fully satisfy the truly benevolent mind, who "loves his neighbor as himself." Do you not see it all?

*SKEPTIC.* — Indeed I do. Your logic is good, I admit it

all. If your premise is good, your conclusion must be. If God is as you represent him, and man is immortal, destined to live on forever, as you expect, then the results *must be* as you anticipate. But oh, those *ifs*, there they stand, still unanswered, and as it seems to me, unanswerable.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — And there they *must stand*, if you insist on *certain* knowledge in regard to the future, until you arrive in that "better country," where

*All mysteries will be*



whole family of man. "All who have borne the image of the earthly will also bear the image of the heavenly." "The whole creation, which now groans and travails in pain together, will eventually be delivered from this bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." So says the good old Bible and reason too.

*SKEPTIC.* — Oh! that it could be so! Such a result of this "Scene of man," all would be glad to believe if they could. All wish for happiness for themselves, and all but demons or evil

spirits want the whole family of man to enjoy the same. None are base enough to wish otherwise.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — That is so. That meets my views exactly. Nothing short of this can satisfy the benevolent mind; nothing less can meet and fulfill the purposes of our heavenly Father in creating such a world as this, and such a race of intelligent beings as we his *dependent* children are.

*SKEPTIC.* — If such could be the final result of things, no one will rejoice more than



vindictive wrath to be held up them to deter them from committing those terrible crimes which, notwithstanding the threatenings of eternal torments which has long been sounded in their ears, are still so frequently taking place in the world?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — I know that is one of the prominent arguments made use of by its believers in its support. But their most urgent and powerful argument is to save men from those more dreadful evils in the future immortal state! They design

by holding up to view that dreadful hell to prevent them from going there to dwell forever! But that, in my view, is altogether a mistake! There is abundant evidence to my mind, and history confirms it, that the propagation of that cruel doctrine, so far from being a benefit to the world, has been a very great evil, and has done infinitely more harm than good ever since its connection with the Christian religion, which was probably in the dark ages of the church, taken from the Pagan and Jewish creeds and incorporated into

the Christian. It has evidently been the cause of most of the persecutions, cruelties, tortures and martyrdoms in Christendom since the days of Tertullian, who flourished in the third century of the Christian era, of whom I have spoken above. (See "Dialogue," page 163, where the subject is more fully discussed.) But notwithstanding all these apparent evils and tempestuous commotions on the voyage of life, we believe "our Father is at the helm," and will surely eventually bring all his intelligent children, which

*we believe* includes *all* the family of man, into the haven of holiness and happiness.

*SKEPTIC.* — Then you think we are all of us the "Children of God." But does not your Bible and many of your preachers call some of us the children of the devil?

*UNIVERSALIST.* — They do, I freely admit. But the passages in the Bible in relation to the devil and his works, we understand to be characteristic and figurative rather than literal. But the preachers and supporters of



"Dialogue," page 30.) Such ideas and arguments have been, and still are, employed by partialist preachers of various sects, especially in times of revivals such as in progress at this time. Now I believe this is all an unnecessary and false alarm, founded on a great mistake. But however it may be, whether there is a personal devil or not, it is all the same to me. If there is, he is certainly one of the creatures of God, and under his control; he will go and come at his bidding, as in the time of Job. He cannot go beyond the length of his

chain. And when his services are no more needed, the Bible assures us that he and his works shall be destroyed. If God and the devil are still belligerent — to carry out the figure — God will surely conquer; He will come out triumphant; His throne is safe; His kingdom is safe, and his children are all assuredly safe. All will be well at last.

*SKEPTIC.* — My dear sir, I have no desire to controvert anything you have now said. If you could assure us that such would be the final result, we should rejoice to



both of which consign a large portion of our race to an ETERNITY OF TORMENTS beyond that fatal river, instead of drawing us to the love of God, and hope of immortality, makes us fear, and tremble, and shrink with horror at the thought of either, and, as it were, repel us from them, and drive us, even against our wishes, down to the dark gulf of infidelity. We would gladly accept of your system if we could have assurance of its truth; but this you cannot give us.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — We

*cannot.* We can only give you the clear teachings of Scripture, and the light of reason, and the innate convictions of our own minds. That is all God has given us, and perhaps it is all that is best for us to have in this twilight and infantile state. Remember, my dear sir, that we are but children, and God is our Father; He knows what is best for us. Children, you know, often want to look into the future: they want to know what will come on the morrow; especially is it so the day before Christmas; they want to know what Santa Claus







vindictive punishment will ever be inflicted by a good and loving Father upon his own offspring, as *we* all *certainly are*. For "He made us and not we ourselves." These are intuitive and self-evident truths and require no argument. If Christ when on the cross could pray for his murderers, and say "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," may we not confidently hope that the same prayer will be made and prevail for all evil doers in all time? For all in some measure do it ignorantly! The Jews must have known they were doing

wrong, but did know they were murdering their best friend and the Saviour of the world; just so with all sinners, they know they are doing wrong—but *do not know* or realize that they are sinning against their best friend; they forget that “*God is love;*” that He is our Father and we all his children in the highest and best sense. I believe it is as true of all sinners at all times, as it was of the crucifiers of Christ. “They *know not what they do!*” or rather, they do not realize its enormity! for had they known they would not have



friends or any of our brethren of the human family; and like that inhuman monster Tertullian, (see "Dialogues," page 49,) anticipate with pleasure "beholding them" groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness "and liquifying in fiercer flames than was ever kindled against Christians," is quite as inhuman and fully equivalent to *hating* them with perfect hatred.

*SKEPTIC.* — My dear sir, words are wholly inadequate to express my present feeling upon this great

subject, ever since reading that "letter of condolence," from my friend N. D., in relation to my brothers death, I have had a most ardent desire for—and I venture to say—a glimmering hope of Immortality! And oh! what a glorious thought! It indeed can be so, if we are really to live again in a higher and better *state*, there to meet and enjoy the company of those friends whose loss we now so deeply deplore. There to "see as we are seen and know as we are known," and learn the real object of our creation; and why and

for what purpose we exist. All this seems reasonable, right and just and in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures as you explain them. Without such a consummation our existence is an impenetrable mystery. With it, all is bright and cheering, and fully displays the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty Architect, the Creator, Father and Friend of all his intelligent children.

*UNIVERSALIST.* — My brother, I rejoice to hear you speak thus, you have now evidently "passed the

**rubicon!" You have taken a step which I trust you will never retrace; hold fast to that "glimmering hope" until it becomes as bright as the meridian sun, and be to you as it was to St. Paul, a "strong consolation," and an anchor to your soul both sure and steadfast; which entereth to that within the vale, whither the forerunner, even Jesus is for us entered."**

## **THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY: THE SOLACE OF THE AGED.**

*"The earnest expectations of*





















*peace,  
If God be with us still.”*

*Of the great plan designed  
by God—  
Ere he commenced  
Creation;  
Or earth’s foundations  
surely laid,  
This is the consummation,*

*All doubts and darkness are  
dispelled,  
All error overthrown;  
Then all “will see as they are  
seen,  
And know as they are  
known.”*

*All sin and sorrow passed*

*away,  
The universe at peace;  
To God be all the glory  
given,  
To man—immortal bliss!*



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